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HB 562
Human Services – Temporary Cash Assistance – Housing Allowance
Hearing of The House Appropriations Committee
February 28, 2023
1:00 PM

SUPPORT

The Public Justice Center (PJC) is a not-for-profit civil rights and anti-poverty legal services organization which seeks to advance social justice, economic and racial equity, and fundamental human rights in Maryland. Our Health and Benefits Equity Project advocates to protect and expand access to healthcare and safety net services for Marylanders struggling to make ends meet. We support policies and practices that are designed to eliminate economic and racial inequities and enable every Marylander to attain their highest level of health. **PJC strongly supports HB 562**, which would require a local department of social services to provide a housing allowance to households that are receiving Temporary Cash Assistance or transitional support services and are not receiving a certain housing subsidy where the tenant's portion of rent is based on a percentage of the tenant's income. It would also require the continuation of a housing allowance for 6 months following the termination of TCA if the household is receiving or is eligible to receive Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program benefits.

Thousands of families in Maryland receive TCA. Though most low-income working families earn too much to qualify for TCA, in fiscal year 2021, over 32,000 Marylanders were TCA recipients.¹ TCA is a block grant program that serves as a critical resource for children and their caretakers, enabling them to pay for shelter, clothing and other necessities.

HB 562 would make housing more affordable for low-income families receiving TCA. Maryland is the 9th most unaffordable state in the country. This is illustrated by the fact that the maximum TCA benefit for a household of 3 is \$727 and the Fair Market Rent for a 2 bedroom in Baltimore City and Baltimore County is \$1,548 per month – more than twice the TCA benefit. This means that families that rely on TCA to cover rent and other necessities and do not have other sources of income are priced out of living in certain Maryland counties. HB 562 addresses this inequity by providing eligible households with an additional \$350 for a household of 1, plus \$100 per additional household

¹ University of Maryland School of Social Work, *Temporary Cash Assistance: 2021 Jurisdictional Snapshots* (April 2022), https://www.ssw.umaryland.edu/media/ssw/fwrtg/welfare-research/life-on-welfare/TCA-Snapshots_2021.pdf?&

member on top of the TCA benefits that they currently receive. If passed, HB 562 would help reduce housing insecurity by providing low-income families with greater access to the housing market.

Everyone should have a place to call home. Housing is a key social determinant of health and essential for enabling all Marylanders to attain good health. For these reasons, the Public Justice Center urges the committee to issue a **FAVORABLE** report for **HB 562**. If you have any questions about this testimony, please contact Ashley Black at 410-625-9409 ext. 224 or blacka@publicjustice.org.